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CARBON MONOXIDE DANGERS

Generator Safety Precautions Can Help Prevent Poisoning



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As Floridians begin the task of preparing for a storm, the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) is urging the public to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) exposure by taking precautions with gas-powered appliances and charcoal or gas grills.

CO is an invisible, odorless, and tasteless gas that is highly poisonous. CO may cause fatigue, weakness, chest pains for those with heart disease, shortness of breath upon exertion, abdominal pain, vomiting, headaches, confusion, lack of coordination, impaired vision, loss of consciousness, and in severe cases death.

DOH-Pinellas recommends the following precautions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- **Do not** burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace.
- **Never** use a generator indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows, or using fans, will not prevent CO build-up in the home.
- **Always** keep portable generators or gasoline engines outside and away from open windows, doors, window air conditioners or exhaust vents that could allow CO to come indoors. Follow the instructions that come with your unit.
- **Install** battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms with battery back-up in your home per the manufacturer's installation instructions. The CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, ASTM D6332, or CSA 6.19.01).
- **Test** your CO alarms per the manufacturer's recommendations and replace dead batteries.
- **Remember** you cannot see or smell CO. Portable generators can produce high levels of CO very quickly.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air right away. Do not delay.

If you suspect CO poisoning, call your nearest Florida Poison Information Center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 immediately.

For updates throughout Hurricane Dorian, follow us on Twitter @HealthyPinellas.

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